[George W. Bates]

Personal narrative Dakota City S - 241 - Dak DUP

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Edna B. Pearson ADDRESS 108 E. 18 Sioux

DATE November 22, 1938 SUBJECT Interview No. 25

1. Name and address of informant [George W. Bates?] Dakota City R F D

2. Date and time of interview November 22, 1938 7 P M

3. Place of interview At his home out from Dakota City

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant no one

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you no one

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

The farm where informant lives has always been in his family and it certainly shows that it has been well taken care of, the buildings kept repaired an painted and the grounds kept in nice shape. The house is white, rather rambling, and a very nice farm home, ample outbuildings. C15 - 2/27/41 - Nebraska

FORM B. PERSONAL HISTORY OF INFORMANT

NAME OF WORKER Edna B Pearson ADDRESS 108 E 18 South Sioux

DATE November 22, 1938 SUBJECT Interview No. 25

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT George W. Bates, Dakota City, R F D

1. Ancestry Leonard Bates father Mary [?] Bates Mother

2. Place and date of birth 1871

3. Family Had no children but raised [?] two children brother and sister, Glennard and Harriet [?] Field

4. Place lived in, with dates Lived on same place all his life

5. Education, with dates had a good country school education

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates Farmed all his life.

7. Special skills and interests interested in farm and community and civic affairs

8. Community and religious activities Member Lutheran Church

9. Description of informant Is a trifle larger than the average man; blue eyes, sandy complection and sandy hair turning a little bit gray; wears a cropped mustach; very pleasant and glad to cooperate in every way, and looks to be about 55 or 60 years of age.

10. Other points gained in interview He is a credit to the community and in well respected and looked up to; has always been very thrifty, and at the same time, very generous.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Edna B Pearson ADDRESS 108 E 18 So Sioux

DATE November 22, 1938 SUBJECT Interview No. 25

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT George W. Bates, Dakota City, R F D

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On August 8, 1953, my father, Leonard Bates, and his brother, Gibson Bates, came to Woodbury County, Iowa. That fall they came across the Missouri river to take up a claim here. They landed in Nebraska in 1853 but didn't stay. Father's brother stayed on the Iowa side and took up a claim near what is now Sergeants Bluff; father came back to what is now Sioux City and surveyed the land between the Big Sioux and the Little Sioux, what is now Riverside, a suburb of Sioux City.

Once, while he and quite a few other men were surveying at what is now Riverside a prairie fire came. The prairie fires would travel as fast as a horse could run, or faster, as the grass was so high and dry, it just went. There was a little creek near where they were surveying and someone said for them to wet their blankets and wrap themselves in the wet blankets and lie on the bank of the creek. They all did that but one man who wouldn't wet his blanket. He got badly burned and had to doctor all winter, but finally, in the spring he died from the effects of the burns.

My father located here in 1854 on a 160 and bought an 80 adjoining. When my father located here buffalo and deer roamed all through this part of the country and on account of the high grass and dense growth of brush it was like a wilderness. Our place is just three-quarters of a mile north of the Twin Churches. Father came from Vermont and mother from Ohio. I am living on part of my father's homestead. He located at Logan, where he had either 80 or 100 acres, two miles west and one mile north of Dakota City. I remember, as a boy, of seeing mounds on the east part of my father's homestead. These mounds had been sod houses at the old town of Logan. There is no sign left now of what was Logan.

Everybody's cattle roamed through there, nobody farmed around Logan. They would bring the cattle home at night and take them back in the morning to graze; got water for them out of Crystal Lake.

What they called the [Colt?] Baird spring is near the Taylor cemetery near Homer. That spring has never been dry.

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They farmed different then than they do now. They had walking plows and walking cultivators and harrows, and revolving harrows; walked at all farm work. Finally they got a wier plow, or a sulky plow. When I was about eight or ten years old I used to plow; I was so little I couldn't reach up to the handles of the plow to swing the plow around at the corners so I would just plow ‘round and ‘round the field and then my father would square up the corners with a one-horse plow; I plowed with two mules and one horse. I couldn't harness my horses but could manage to get their bridles on because I had about a ten inch plank that I could stand on and in that way could get their bridles on. I remember one time we had a man help plow; each team had three horses; it was a walking plow; I had one team and one of my horses got the blind staggers. I couldn't do anything with them but managed to hold the plow in the furrow so they couldn't cut themselves until I attracted the attention of the man who was plowing and he helped with the horses. If they had gotten their fetlocks cut they might as well be killed.

Years ago they had up-land hay, little fine hay that had little rattle boxes; when these little rattle boxes were ripe they were poison and would kill the horses when they would eat this hay. It killed so many horses on the Missouri bottom that they called it “Bottom Disease.”

One man had a pony that he said he would donate to see if the “rattle box” hay would kill it; they fed it nothing but this hay and it died.

With this disease the horses would just get crazy and would get out of the barn and would walk around and around, in the corner of a fence or around a hay stack, no matter what the weather, if it was in the summer or if there were two feet of snow on the ground. It didn't hurt the cattle. The prairie is all broke up now and there is no more wild grass.

Aunt Hannah Boals, wife of David Boals, was one of the first white women in Dakota county.

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The Indians, in the very early days, would come right in to your house if they could got in. If you were good to them they were good to you, but if you weren't good to them they would scalp you alive.

The first school I went to was the Meridian school. It was small to start with. [?] My folks would keep everybody going through the country.

I was just a little tad at the time of the blizzard of 1888. There were my two sisters and brother at school. The teacher let any of the scholars go home when any of their parents came after them; they came in bob sleds. My father came after us and, boy! by the time we got home we kids had laid down in the bottom of the sled and had a buffalo robe over us. Father had a driving team and he could hardly get them to face the storm. That morning it started to get colder and colder, and then it started blowing and snowing. If people got a mile away from home they just couldn't get back home; they lost their way.

In the winter we used to drive right over fences because the snow would be three or four feet deep and we could drive right over the fences with bob sleds and a teem. We couldn't shovel the snow because it would be just like ice.

There used to be a Methodist church, Grace Church, about three-quarters of a mile north and a mile west of where we now live; there used to be ceder trees around it. I remember one Thanksgiving time, my father had just bought a [?] brand now wagon, and it was a treat to get a ride in a brand new wagon. Thanksgiving morning he had four spring seats on the wagon and the wagon was full of people and we were going to Grace Church for services. It was a frosty, cold morning and father was driving along pretty fast when a tire came off one of the back wheels. It was so cold and there must have been a defect in the tire that caused it to come off. Father threw the tire in the back end of the wagon and we drove on. The congregation couldn't support a church and they needed at a church in Hubbard so that church was moved to Hubbard; it took them all one winter to move it to Hubbard.

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There was no corn planter in this county for a long time. Finally they had one. It had a long box in front containing the seed corn; this box had two holes, or markers, and as the horses walked along, every so often the man would jerk the marker and in that way could plant two rows of corn at a time.

We used to have Lyceums in those days; had a president and secretary. The president, of course, called the meetings to order and presided at the meetings. They would have debates; would choose sides and debate, and have spelling schools and spell down. would have singing school; had a regular singing school. At school we would have programs and dialogues. I remember every year when school would be out we always put on quite a program and we all looked forward to our programs. [?] We used to have basket socials and would have lots of fun getting some fellow to bid high for his girl's basket. John Mitchell had the first singing school, which met one night out of the week to sing. I remember we used to sing “Old Tubel Cain”, “Over That Jasper Sea,” “Good Old Noah”, “ “We all Have a Very Bad Cold”, but one song we all liked best to sing was “Don't Leave the Farm, Boys.” These are the words: “Come, boys, I have something to tell you, Come near, I would whisper it low: You are thinking of leaving the homestead, Don't be in a hurry to go. The city has many attractions, But think of the vices end sins When once in the vortex of fashion, How soon the course downward begins.

Chorus: Don't be in a hurry to go, (don't go;) Don't be in a hurry to go, (don't go;) Better risk the old farm a while longer, Don't be in a hurry to go.

(Repeat whole chorus) c You talk of the mines of Australia, They're wealthy in gold without doubt, But ah! there is gold in the farm, boys, If only you'll shovel it out. The mercantile trade is a hazzard

The goods are first high and then low. Better risk the old farm a while longer, Don't be in a hurry to go.

Chorus “The great busy West has inducements, And so has the busiest mart; But wealth is not made in a day, boys, Don't be in a hurry to start. The bankers and brokers are wealthy, They take in their thousands or so. Ah! think of the frauds and deceptions, Don't be in a hurry to go.

Chorus “The farm is the safest and surest, The orchards are loaded today; You're as free as the air of the mountains, And monarch of all you survey. Better stay on the farm a while longer, Tho' the profits come in rather slow. Remember you've nothing to risk, boys, Don't be in a hurry to go.

Chorus:

There were lots of log houses in the early days; they were plastered on the inside with some kind of hard clay; had dirt roof and grass would grow on top of the roof; the roofs were pointed and the water would run off the roofs.

I remember the first time the train went through. There were no fences between our place and the railroad. I remember we [?] took my father, in a spring wagon, down to the railroad. The train came from the west going to Sioux City. We flagged the train and he went to Sioux City on it and when he came back the train stopped and let him off and we met him and brought his home.

There were no fences then and if cattle got on the track the trainment trainmen would chase them off. It was the Northwestern narrow guage. The narrow guage was three feet, six inches wide, not as wide as the standard guage. They started it in 1876. [?] We had rail fences for years.

Many a time we got stuck on a sand bar when crossing the Missouri river ont on the ferry; didn't know whether it would take a day or a half day to get off the sandbar. Captain Luther would do his best but the river would change its course. When the Missouri would get so low that they couldn't run the ferry boat they would put in the pontoon bridge; the channel

would change, being some times on the Iowa side and some times on the Nebraska side. One time we were surely soared. We went over to Sioux City on the pontoon bridge, in the spring of the year. The ice was going out and the water was rising and the pontoon was liable to go out. My father and mother were in a spring wagon and I was supposed to lead a team behind the spring wagon. We drove down to the river but couldn't see the pontoon bridge on the Nebraska side, but kept on driving in to the water. The water kept getting deeper and deeper until it got to the bottom of the spring wagon box, and was about up to the horses' knees. Mother and I began to cry and finally father turned back. If he had gone on, the pontoon bridge might have gone out. We stayed in town and the next day we went home on the railroad. Father came back to Sioux City and loaded the teem into the box car and brought then home.